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ESSAYS IN VERSE.

Edith Good from
M. W. Sinclair

ESSAYS IN VERSE

1892
—

BY

MAY SINCLAIR

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.

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1891

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MAY 3 1954 SLOCUM

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FEARFUL betwixt a hope and fear,
My soul, in grey autumnal moods,
Moves in a twilight landscape drear,
Hath friendship for forgotten woods
And kindred with the wasting year.
Surely some wordless sympathy
Hath the world's heart for my heart's misery.

Here is no voice, no rapturous strain,
No wedding-song of heaven and earth,
No jubilant show of boundless birth
To mock this death-in-life of pain ;
No light, no shadow on the hill,
Nor any on the sodden plain ;
The life of all the woods is still ;
No sweet wind murmurs at his will
To leaves that whisper of the coming rain.

A low grey roof of seamless cloud
So close to the grey land is bowed,
The dim hills pierce it, and below,
Sunk in a watery atmosphere,—
The dull earth darkens, and the sere

Field-grasses and the leafless trees,
 Save for their waveless stillness, show
 Like monstrous shapes of things that grow
 Down the weird depths of sunless seas,
 Mid cavernous gloom and twilight mysteries.

Untouched, unmoved, un murmuring,
 The soul of every living thing
 Seems in the hushed and gleamless noon
 To draw a thin unconscious breath,
 'Twixt the dull earth and ashen cloud,
 As of a soul that lies in swoon
 Between the death-bed and the shroud,
 Being held for dead who slumbereth,
 Peopling with living dreams the land of death.

Oh Earth ! Oh Mother ! Not in vain
 Let thy child call, whose soul doth see
 The likeness of herself in thee,
 Familiar dearness, joy or pain ;
 And with thy mystic life inwrought,
 Deep human life of love and thought,
 That losing finds itself again.
 Oh Earth ! Oh Mother ! Answer me—
 How without death can true life be ?
 How but for sorrow joy up-spring ?
 Were there no sleep, would there be wakening ?

November, 1889.

GUYON.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE.

οὔτε γὰρ ἂν γνούς τὸ γε μὴ εἶν, οὐ γὰρ ἐφικτόν,
οὔτε φράσαις· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν καὶ εἶναι.

PARMENIDES. Τὰ Πρὸς Ἀληθείην.

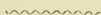
“There is one ruler, the Self within all things, who makes the one form manifold. . . . There is one eternal Thinker, thinking non-eternal thoughts, who, though one, fulfils the desires of many. . . .”

“Let Self know the Self.”

UPANISHADS.

GUYON.

A PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUE.



PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE.

GUYON.—HAMILTON.—MERIVAL.—AUGUSTIN.—

DANIEL.

DAN. I little thought when I was pushed aside
In this small village corner, set so far
Out of the world, to get you all again
Together thus, with every look and tone
The same as ever, though you have grown so
great
In all men's eyes. I'm not so ignorant,
Through drowsing in a country parsonage,
As not to hear of you, while Hamilton
Lectures on all things in the universe
And out of it, while Guyon yearly blooms
In authorship, and I can sit and read
Merival's sermons.

GUY. Are we so unchanged ?
'Tis seven years since our old college days.

MER. Ay, seven years, and Hamilton was then
The impetuous Apollodorus, say,
Of our Socratic dialogues, and you
Phædon or Theætetus. We who nursed
Your swaddling wit and held the leading-strings
It learned to walk in, how our prophecies
Sailed in the future for you, bringing back
Hope of the golden-bright Hesperides.

GUY. See Daniel shaking his grave head at us
In solemn deprecation.

AUG. Well he may.
He thinks you have but found the Dead Sea
shore,
And bear but ashen apples in your hands,
And not the sweet fruit of the fabled Isles.

HAM. The *fabled* Isles ?

MER. Ay, and the Dead Sea shore,
Where, by a Moslem legend that forecast
Our Western science, men were turned to apes.

DAN. 'Tis as I feared ; a look in Guyon's eye
Forebodes an argument. As once before,
My rooms are at your service, gentlemen.

GUY. Here, as of old at Oxford, we will wheel
Each one the spheres to his own point of view
And then compare.

DAN. And I, your injured host,
Will keep the peace.

GUY. That is, you'll rush between,
When we fall out, and part us?

MER. Daniel knows
My interest is keen to question you
Who in your several paths have strayed so far
From where we started. And, Augustin, you
Surprised me most, for you and Guyon here
Set off together in those devious ways
He since has followed. Pray, what parted
you?

AUG. Guyon has ranged his powers on Reason's
side.

I take my stand by Faith that hath endured
The shocks of centuries, that hearkeneth
Unto no alien voice, but is secure
In her own cause, her strength being not her
own,

But of the Church and God. I trusted once
In Reason, till she lured my soul that sought
Pure truth unto the shores of nothingness ;
Then left me ; and I had my choice to rest
There, or to follow Faith that filled the void
With Godhead. But there was no middle
path,

Where I could stand and look both ways and
reach

A hand to Reason and a hand to Faith ;
Or go with Faith half-way, and for the rest
Trust to a right of judgment which might lead

Where, who could just foresee? I would be
sure ;

And in no other Church than Rome I find
Peace and safe calm.

HAM. Doth Reason at the gates
Never knock clamorously, threatening
This your indoor security?

AUG. Not now.
I know the worth of Reason, honour her,
And trust her as my guide in earthly things ;
But she hath fallen and lost for evermore
Her high estate in heaven through her pride.

HAM. Yet Reason is more humble than you think.
Too proud perhaps to ask the helping hand
Of doubtful allies, proud to prove her power
Unfortified, yet all humility,
Knowing the limits of that power ;—in short,
Too proudly humble to proclaim and preach
For certainties the things she cannot know.

GUY. Where would you fix her limits then?

HAM. Confined
In the maze of sense, she tracks by slow
degrees
A slender clue that subtly circling brings
Her feet for ever to the self-same point
They started from. It is in vain she yearns
For the pure light, which she shall never see
Save through the prism of sense. And so, I
think,

That Reason is no keen discoverer
 Of truths not given ; but of all she finds
 About her sets in order, brings from far
 Things disunited, joining them ; or pulls
 The universe to bits, to piece again
 In the same weary pattern as before.
 But to discover aught beyond, to link
 The things we see unto the vast unseen,
 To seek and find 'neath all appearances
 The truth that is, 'tis this she cannot do.

AUG. If Reason must confess her ignorance
 Of absolute truth, by what authority
 Would she dispute Faith's ground, or how dis-
 prove
 Aught that Faith takes for granted ?

DAN. (Answer *that* !)

GUY. Subtly you turn your argument, yet see
 Not that which every argument implies—
 That Reason is the organ Faith must use
 To justify herself.—

HAM. And if that fail ?

MER. It will not fail. Faith is not, never was
 Sole witness to God's truth. If God has
 given

A double revelation in His Word,
 And in His world of Nature and of man,
 I would accept them both. I do believe
 There's not one victory that Reason wins,
 No stubborn fact subdued, no clearer ground

Reclaimed from the entanglement of things,
No step by which a conquering science treads
To higher vantage-ground, but there, no less,
Faith triumphs too. If she toss back the
hand

That helps her, 'tis a suicidal deed,
Believe me. I have pondered on this theme ;
And I have marked with pain th' ignoble heat,
Half wrath, half fear, with which our faithless
Faith

Flings her unwarlike form upon the foe.
A lover of light science, being read
A little in her secrets, though not learned,
From dealings with her—or from dabbings,
say,

In shallow pools of knowledge—there took
place

A spiritual “osmosis,” by which Faith
Was purified from inward waste and lives.
Faith is an off-shoot of the very Vine,
Yet one that rears itself on its own stem
More straight and strong, no weakling parasite,
A living thing that upward grows and holds
Its intercourse of use with earth and air.

AUG. How of that further offspring of your shoot,
Rank Unbelief? For this I blame your cause
That gave it all the ground it stands upon.
Sly Protestants! when your “protesting”
grows

To criticism, and criticism to doubt,
 And doubt to dead denial, where is then
 The faith you boasted? With her citadel
 Taken through treachery within her walls!

MER. All our protesting you must needs confess
 Was against some abuses of your Church.

AUG. They are the crust about the good old wine
 That do attest the virtues of its age.

GUY. Let us break up this grave Symposium
 And taste the summer-time a little while
 Within the garden; for the air is cool,
 And we are heated with our argument.

[*They go out.*]

AUG. The issue of this battle lies between
 Guyon and me. Your pardon, Merival,
 Yours is an earnest soul that seeks for truth
 On every side, but in the jarring claims
 Of opposite opinions falls a prey
 To either party. As for Hamilton,
 I sorrow for him, and I sorrow more
 Through sympathy; for I myself have known
 This sickness of the soul.

HAM. Sorrow no more
 For me. I am as peaceful and content
 As Daniel there who never felt a pang
 Of doubt, or if the conflux of ideas
 Brought thought of such, dismissed it as a
 freak
 Of fancy or of Satan's subtlety.

MER. Nay. This content of discontentment born,
I cannot understand it. If your soul
Thus occupied with semblances despairs
Of any truth, this thought should give you
pain.

HAM. I hold not with the strictest of my school,
And would maintain this darkness of th'
Unknown
To be the dark of light, above, beyond
Our earthly atmosphere.

MER. Nay. Let me think
That God has mercy on our mortal state ;
That 'tis man's weakness makes necessity
Of God-like condescension, truth revealed
Through human touches, through the use of
sense,
Which He has given as we best may bear—
Savage or Christian.

HAM. Does He ever sport
With human fancies, in an endless round
Of shifting adaptations to our need,
That shifts and changes with the centuries ?

MER. Not wholly. Though the dawn of truth be
slow,
Climbing the eastern hills, yet suddenly
The morning looks over the topmost ledge,
Fulfilled in Christ our Sun. And for the rest,
I cannot think that God has lied to us
In mockeries of sense.

HAM. Do but suppose
Our world the one plain, given reality ;
Or else a faithful transcript, word for word
Ectype of that which is, or counterpart
As cameo and intaglio—such a world
Made good in reason, does eternity
Contain the archetypes of earthly things?—
Sin, sorrow, imperfection and disease?—
The sufferance and the loss of finite fate?

MER. Nay—these are negatives if rightly seen ;
The loss or opposite—as dark of light.

HAM. Maybe, yet very positive in pain.
The self-same nerves that bear the messages
From the beyond of gladness and delight,
Are ministers no less of misery.
There is no mark by which a man may tell
The ill that is not from the good that is,
Both seeming present—evil stereotyped
Likewise to all eternity with good.

MER. Well, I accept your rendering of my creed.
I'd say that *all* is representative
Of that which is ; only our eyes behold
The broken sections of the perfect plan
Wherein all pain and evil has its part,
And every work of God is justified
At last in ways we know not of. But you,
Though you have made the temple of your
soul
Empty and swept and garnished in just dread

Of aught mean and polluting, 'tis, no less,
By this negation of all quality
Empty of God and goodness.

HAM. Be it so.

MER. What of your fellow-men, and animals
So dear to man? what dearness is for you
In them? They are the phantoms of the dream
That mocked you; and illusion must beget
Hatred or scorn?

HAM. Not so; they minister
Unto my life and share my doom of death.
All Nature's face, mute, blindly beautiful,
Looks with a kindred meaning into mine.
If this be so, if kinship can make dear,
Wonder not at my love. Oh, Merival!
You wrong me, for I have a certain faith,
(Maybe unjustified) and I have hope
Likewise. I'd say: Strive thou thy utmost. If
Thy striving miss the mark, what then? it gave
More strength. As some vague instinct
handed down
Through many forms of the brute beasts, at last
Is perfected, grows swift, unerring, sure;
How knowest thou but thy dim desires may tend
To the perfection of thy race or thee,
It here, or thou hereafter; till they stray
No longer? As the first faint streaks of light
In ocean-sunlights sinking dimly down,
Finding life's lowliest form prepared—some pale

Insensate creature sleeping on the sea—
Thrilled the light, listless mass, and pierced
their way,

And trod their tiny track, till the vague nerve
Became a seeing eye in higher forms,
With livelier consciousness. From what hath
been

Hope for what shall be. E'en as a blind man,
Who sees the sparks from his own eyeballs shoot
Sidelong in the dim darkness, knows them well
For what they are ; yet e'en to him they show
What light is—what light could be, perfected.

It is enough if we may haply know
The bounds of utmost knowledge, that firm bank
Fronting the infinite sea, where Reason rests
Knowing she hath walked with shadows,
worked alway

With shifting symbols. Of this lowliness
Of baffled Reason Faith knows nothing—See,
While in the awful silence Reason bows
Before her infinite Unknown, your Faith
Will rear her little pedestal, and lo!
Another idol sits behind the veil,
A doubly-mocking sphinx. One truth I hold
With Socrates—the only sure result
Of knowledge is, to know our ignorance.

GUY. In other words, the sole thing Reason proves
Is just its own impossibility?

DAN. Pooh ! a mere negative result ! Give me

When we would grasp him. Our thoughts
shape themselves
Like patterns in some curious colour-glass,
Reflection of reflection, shaken by
A hand invisible ; and Self doth take
His fashion as the glittering fragments fall
And group themselves anew.

DAN. Well, you may talk.
But fetch one man of honest common-sense,
And pit him me 'gainst three philosophers,
And let them preach till doomsday, arguing
In much your airy fashion, they will ne'er
Shake that one man in his absurd belief
In matter and his self-identity.
You ask for proofs? This walnut that I fling
At your wise head refutes its theory.
Come, tell me, which is harder of the two?
And is it you or I is hit?

GUY. Indeed,
Daniel is worthy of a bishopric
For doing battle in the good old cause
Of common-sense.

MER. And yet I see what way
Your argument is drifting ; and for me
'Tis just this failure of the reason proves
The need of faith and all the power of faith
Supplying human need and answering
The universal anguish of the cry
Of human nature yearning to its God.

GUY. Nay. 'Tis not *I* who so despair of truth,
And blame my reason when I fail to find
Without what cometh only from within.
So doubt and faith are children of one birth,
Both cradled in despair. Augustin here,
Turning his mistress Reason out of doors,
Reviles the faithless jade. And Hamilton,
Pulling his house about his ears, looks out
Beneath the rubbish to the infinite void,
And swears he never had a home! And yet
We all are honest wooers of the truth,
And if some fail to win her, 'tis, no doubt,
Through some too-dainty reticence of soul,
Distrustful of itself. I would be bold;
And bid you from within build up again
The fabric of the lovely universe
Your sophistry destroyed. I think, e'en now,
We three agreed that reason gives no sign
Of any ultimate reality
Apart from and beyond the world we know?
I ask you all: *Why should we look beyond?*
The world that reason fashions through and
through
Is no phantasmal mockery, no cheat
Palmed off on reason from behind the scenes
Of consciousness. The soul that knows the
world
Itself through knowledge brings it to the birth,
In thought upholds it and but perfects it

In reason. Therefore reason cannot reach
To a more real world beyond. Itself
Being the one reality.

MER.

If so,

We are finished in the finite, perfected
In our poor present ; knowledge as it stands
All-satisfying. Though we may multiply
By more of the same kind, no need to look
Beyond the finite since it gives us truth.

GUY.

I must repeat : Why should we look beyond ?
The Infinite is here. If thought were not
In itself infinite, how came we e'er
To know this finite universe of ours
As finite ? And the ceaseless flux of things,
This round of birth and death could never be
Save for the presence of the eternal Self
That changeless notes these changes of the
hours.

Nor yet again that mystic unity
In boundless difference, one key-note struck
Through all the chords of being, making clear
The harmony of universal law.

MER.

Nay, be consistent. You have forfeited
All right to talk of "universal law."
Make Self the All, and our caprice must be
The only law the universe obeys !

GUY.

Not so. The Self I thought of, Merival,
It is the highest Self made manifest
In reason, where the human and divine

First touch and close. We live not in ourselves,
 Nor for ourselves, but rather all are one
 By virtue of one Soul that works unseen
 In inward as in outward seeming, rests
 The same through all, unfolding thousand-fold
 This forward vision of our consciousness
 We call the universe. True Self of all,
 In it all difference has passed away
 Of thee and me.

MER.

As I interpret it,
 Your creed is much the same as Hamilton's,
 With his Unknowable. Your Soul of souls
 You have stripped naked of all mark or sign
 By which to know it, love it, worship it—
 Abstract of nothingness, the total sum
 Of multiplied negations, blind, blank, void ;
 So are you Godless still. 'Twere sophistry
 By which you would deny it, howe'er you shrink
 From avowed atheism.

GUY.

Consider it
 A little longer ; and I grant you well
 Some justice in your first fine burst of scorn,
 Your "total of negations." For 'tis just
 This same negation of the finite Self ;
 Of all it thinks and hopes and bodies forth
 In life, its broken dream of three-score years ;
 Of all it fashions, all that fashioneth it ;
 Negation of all limit ; sacrifice
 Of semblances, by which our minds approach

The Infinite.

And would you fill the blank
With pictures of the senses, line on line,
And limit within limit, changing all
Like lantern-spectres, forms that move and fade,
With thoughts that take their tinting, born of
them,

With dreams that die? I hold with Hamilton
Such nothingness, such emptiness, but loss
Of that which howsoever multiplied
Could add no whit to that reality,
Still the more real as untouched by this
Our incompleteness—yet alone complete
E'en as it perfects and maintains itself
Through imperfection. Infinite alone
But so far as the finite falls within
The compass of its being. And but One
In that it overcomes all difference
In its own nature. All opposing things
It knits together. Nothing hath a side
That shuts it from all others, but somewhere
Some secret influence will work a way
And charm it from itself—No stone so dead,
But at the touches of the sunlight stirs,
Kindled and thrilling to its central heart—
Star by star drawn, the course it holds in
heaven

Shaped for it by another—Life to life
Linked through all grades of being; none so low,

That makes his spirit servant to its will.
 And in all martyrdom where man is made,
 Through loss, e'en death itself to minister
 Unto the furtherance of diviner ends
 Than he e'er dreamed of.

Here we all may meet

On common ground ; the simple faith that
 knows
 No dark misgiving ; the all-eager thought
 That reaches past the finite to a world
 Of infinite reality beyond
 Its grasp of knowledge ; and no less, the doubt,
 The noble doubt that sacrifices all,
 Rather than bring to shame and poverty
 The truth it loves. We tread the self-same way ;
 And from what centre hailing—knowledge,
 life,
 Or the cold heights of duty—everywhere
 Self-abnegation is the starting-point
 For each, and union with the Highest Self
 The final goal of all.

MER.

Well, be it so.

In the Hereafter are we perfected ;
 And there I trust our knowledge takes its
 place
 Amongst eternal things.

GUY.

Ay, takes its place ;

As one who after travelling on a road,
 A little hedgerow lane where sight is shut

From the wide distance, while the pathway
crawls

To, a mountain-foot, will stand and look at
last

Upon the winding path by which he came,
And sees the lowly country lying mapped
Before him, many a field and hedgèd square,
And many roads that cross and intersect
Each other and all leading to that height,
His own slight footway takes its place as part
Of a great landscape—yet how different
Is all the fashion of its scenery
From those o'er-looking uplands, where he
stands

And sees the awful mountains face to face.
But where is Daniel?

HAM.

Nay. You well may ask.

He left us half an hour ago. See there !
On the high bank between this garden ground
And that, yon quiet garden of the graves,
The glow-worms glimmer in the grass. 'Tis
late—

I heard just now the tower-bell tolling ten.

TWO STUDIES FROM THE
LIFE OF GOETHE.

TWO STUDIES FROM THE LIFE OF GOETHE.

I.

STRASBURG, 1779.

STRASBURG again, again the well-known streets
And Minster spire above the gables. Here,
In the old inn they still remember me,
A wild young student. Well, I need not dread,
After this lapse of time, the looking back ;
Nor yet to ask myself what I have gained,
Or lost, in these eight years. Above all, here,
Where one sad memory is strongest ; here,
Thinking of poor Frederica, and her love,
What shall I say ?

I left her. If I were
Another, not myself, I could set forth,
Doubtless, enough ingenious paradox
To justify my conduct to myself—
Thus : “ I was faithful through unfaithfulness ;

True to a high ideal that I saw
 Ever before me ; faithless, if you will,
 To its eidolon, its deceitful shade
 That mocked me." No, that will not pass. I know
 No elegant cosmetic of excuse
 To make a plain deed beautiful.

Let none

Say that I did not suffer. Oh ! that time !
 How recklessly and yet how languidly,
 With what half-dazed, imperfect consciousness
 Did I live through it ; till at last the thought,
 Th' importunate thought that dogged my fancy, came
 Clamouring for audience.

I was worse than fool ;

For downright folly has a certain force
 Of sightless perseverance ; all its path
 Lies plain before it, trammelled by no doubt,
 It works straight on, looks not to right or left,
 And shapes a deed consistent with itself ;
 So could not I.

Oh, lovely Sesenheim !

Let me look back. Th' idyllic landscape lies
 Enskied in purest memory. I see
 The sunlit waves of the long meadow-grass
 Shimmering and swaying half a league away ;
 See the still cornfields, with their young green blades
 Scarce a foot high ; see the low hamlets grouped
 Each in its own green shelter of thick trees ;
 How beautiful the dim hills of the Vosges,

With their blue mist, only a thought more deep
Than the blue sky. I see the Parsonage,
Grey, weather-worn ; the seat upon a knoll
Crowned with fair trees—Frederica's " Resting-place,"
Where, as I rode along the meadow-path
'Twixt Drusenheim and Sesenheim, she stood
Shading her eyes a moment ; far away,
I knew the clean white dress and shining head—
Ah, what a slender little neck it was
To bear that golden crown of braided hair !—
She stood all still a moment ; her blue eyes
Looked towards Drusenheim and looked for me.
Then, when she saw me, down the uneven slope,
She leaped from mossy stone to stone ; she cleared
The little stile, the narrow stream ; more swift
And surer-footed than her own white goats.
She was most beautiful where other girls
Are ever most ungainly ; this fine grace
Of lovely movement Nature gives alone
To the wild things that live with her, and learn
Her ways, unspoiled by custom or by art.
She leaned upon my shoulder, and we looked
To where the boundaries of earth and heaven
Were melting in a drifting mist, lit through
By the red-golden sunshine. The sun set,
The woodland birds were silent ; but the lark
Chanted continuous evensong of joy,
Rapt in the heaven he loves. What harmony
There was in all things ! Even so, I deemed,

Just then, that love of ours was perfect, one
With the glad day, the sunny landscape ; one
With every better thought within the soul ;
One with the universal Love that warms
The world's cold heart and in the heart of man
First groweth conscious, knows itself as love—
And so on. I was young eight years ago.
How was it that I could not well connect
And count the links within that chain of change ?
I was so critical. The love that sought
Nearness of knowledge, in its seeking found
Fault and defect. 'Twas ever so with me ;
I loved, I studied keenly, passionately,
The architecture of the Minster there ;
Until, for all its splendour, the old tower
Topped by yon cross, with all its mighty spire
Unfinished, jarred upon my sight. For, see,
Instead of that great cross, there should have been
A higher, slenderer, central spire above
Four lesser spires, one at each corner set
Of the square tower, to carry still the eye
Onward and upward until sight is lost
In the blue distance. As it is, that cross
Stands as an emblem of all unfulfilled
Endeavour, type of man's imperfect thought,
Developing no end to harmonize
With its beginning. Patiently and long
I gazed upon the tower and questioned it
Until it told its secret ; and I found

My thought was but the Master's thought who planned
The whole, a great idea left incomplete
By those who cast it into stone. And so
I gaze on everything till it unfolds
Its inmost heart to me ; and thus I learnt
The secret of the bird's song, of the flower,
The tree, the tiny insect in the grass,
The very stars in heaven. Thus I looked .
Into that child's blue eyes till I compelled
Their innocent confession. Through and through
I looked, I searched her nature ; with the rest
She too became a study, put aside
When finished, as it were. She left her home,
Her Sesenheim, where every simple scene,
The field, the orchard, and the garden made
Part of her grace, and she a part of all ;
With no unfitness in her neighbourhood
Marring the delicate idyll, so complete
In form and colour and soft atmosphere.
She came to Strasburg. There I could not name
The fault in her, it was a thing of sense,
And indefinable by thought, a shade
Cast by the passing cloud, a subtle change
In the fine light I viewed her in ; and yet
No less the charm was lost. Love lingered out
A death so gradual that her sweet self,
As thoughtless and as guileless as a child,
Was all unconscious of it. Oh ! the pain,
When e'en her gentle presence wearied me,

Of seeing all her pretty ways, her looks
 So unaware and trusting ; through it all
 To feel her kisses ; hear her playful words
 Shower daily, hourly, their unmeant reproach.
 Therefore I left her.

I remember well

The parting from her ; 'twas at Sesenheim.
 Poor child, she clambered up her little hill
 To stand and look her very last at me.
 How pitiful it was to see her turn
 Away to hide herself ; her golden head
 Bowed, and her white face hidden in her hands.—
 It is too much. I will not think of it.
 How could I fail to understand myself ?
 That restlessness, that secret discontent
 It was the quickening of new life, a growth
 We are but conscious of through aching pain
 And weariness. That fatal afternoon
 At Sesenheim, hadst thou but read my soul,
 Frederica ! what a chaos were disclosed,
 What tumult of discordant elements,
 What wretchedness, what wild uncertainty,
 Passionate longing, alternating moods
 Of gloom and rapture ; doubt, desire, despair !
 I knew not what I would. I knew not which
 Were better—whether let those forces rage,
 Work as they would, until the cancelling
 Of each by each restore the balance (true,
 A long and painful process this) ; or else

Favour one impulse, subdue all the rest
To the fulfilment of one passion, one
Power among many. For I reasoned thus
With my false self: " Mere love's an influence
So fleeting ; wherefore let it interfere
To stay a tendency, an inmost power
Shaping a soul in darkness ? "

Let me think.

Let me not be unjust to that sweet child.
Maybe her pure love was itself a power
Helping, not hindering higher life ? Not so.
Genius can only breathe on certain heights
The air of freedom. On the mountain-top
It graves its laws upon the virgin stone,
And the blind herd obey them as supreme,
And question not their origin divine ;
But its own life is hidden as the springs
Of that rapt inspiration, and unfolds
From within outwards. What if I had laid
A bond about my nature ? Surely then
My own loss in that ruinous sacrifice
Had been more great than hers, e'en as my aims
Were vaster ?

Oh ! it ever was my curse
To act upon one impulse ; then reflect
In a cool leisure. I can fling aside
Distasteful thought, give passion its full swing,
Express all sweetness from the instant joy ;
Then—just when all self-consciousness is lost

In love, my being in another's—then,
In the rapt moment comes the change. I stand
Aloof, and contemplatively look on
At my own work ; an individual
Shut in a life apart, sharp-sighted, keen
To criticize, weigh each intense delight
Of sense or soul ; balancing thought 'gainst thought,
Passion 'gainst passion ; then dissect, compare
In a full concentrated light—like some
Bright insect quivering 'neath the microscope—
My living joys, till in th' analysis
The love is lost which was the life of all.
I do remember, at the time I deemed
Myself a miserable fool to count
The worth of love's pure gold in copper coin.
Why can I never taste the simplest joys,
But this mean calculating self begins
His questioning—"How much of personal gain,
What knowledge, strength or furtherance to my art
Has this day brought me?" If it comes to that,
Was there not stuff in this slight episode
For fifty lyrics, idylls—tragedies?
Then shall I blame my birth, my spirit formed
From father's spirit, keen, requisitive,
Through over-culture nice in all its needs,
Dispassionate judge of nature, men and art ;
From mother's warmth, the swift nerves tremulous
To all glad impulses of thought and sense?
Behold a being curiously wrought

Of fine-t inconsistencies ! Throughout
The poet's fervid nature runs a vein
Of coldest criticism, that unawares
Tempers the tide of passion in full flow.
Had I the mastery of these two powers
What could I not fulfil ? Some wondrous work
Of exquisite proportion, where that sense
Of fitness tames the lawless luxury
Of young imagination which affects
The sensuous grotesque. And yet no lack
Of human passion, of the natural heat
That gives life, colour, movement to the whole.
Let this then be my aim. So let me strive
Towards uttermost fulfilment, balancing
Precisely all my powers. So bring to nought
All hindrance to the spirit's inner life.
Cling to no mere ideal without match
In the fair world of things, nor suffer there
Aught that's imperfect to proclaim itself
Eternal. Look not into self ; nor deem
Its shadow lengthening with the sinking sun
True measure of its stature—look without
To Nature in her truth ; not studying
Her typeless sports of fancy, fitful moods
Of wild creation, or her failures flung
Broad-cast around ; her shrunken dwarfs and huge
One-sided overgrowths, deformities
Whether of soul or body ; but in all,
In inner as in outer, ever seek

Measure, proportion.

Wherefore of the rest
Make further question? Nothing can be lost
To him who knows to plan his life aright,
And make the best of all that time can bring—
Knowledge, love, beauty. Should my work endure,
Can I o'erlook the secret debt I owe
To thee, Frederica,—now that I can see
As from afar thy gentle influence draw
And shape in part the orbit of my world?
Thy meek self-sacrifice was not in vain;
Thou gavest thine all, and thy sweet life is linked,
Whether I willed or willed it not, with mine.
As for thyself, I would no less believe
The memory shall be with thee, and the light
Far-faring of the vanished star of love.

How late it grows! On yonder side the street
The gabled shadows lengthen, 'gainst the sky
The very Minster-cross is dim. Ah, well!
To-morrow I will ride to Sesenheim,
And see Frederica once before I go.

II.

SESENHEIM, 1772.

No, sister, call me not ; I cannot come.
Here in the summer stillness, for a while
Love lives a quiet life in memory.
Here I can turn my keepsakes o'er, the books
He gave me once, the ribbons he himself
Painted for me, with blue forget-me-nots
On a white ground ; and in my locket—ah !
One curl of his brown hair, so beautiful,
So fine.

Downstairs I keep my eyelids dry
When tears would ease them, swallow down my sighs
Lest they should hear ; for when they see me sad
They sigh for company, and hold my hand ;
And when I break loose from them, their kind eyes
Follow me pitifully about the room.
And pity angers me that means reproach,
Perhaps, of him. Who has a right to think
A thought against him ? He who was my own
To praise or blame. And if I blame him not,
Who then shall dare to ?

Yes. He was too great
 For me. I should have known it, let him go
 Before it came to this ; and then, perhaps,
 He had not left me, and I might have seen
 His face sometimes which now I may not see,
 Nor hear his kind voice speak. No, never more.
 Would I were old ; for cruel youth is strong
 To bear, and will not sicken, will not die.
 God help me ! lest in suffering I grow
 Selfish, as I was selfish in the love
 That would have clung to him and dragged him down.
 Once all my will was but that I could make
 Out of my own poor life some sacrifice,
 However slight, for one who gave me all
 His wealth, I bringing nothing in return.
 And were he but—as some great men have been—
 Poor and despised, the world too ignorant
 To know his greatness, if this could have been,
 Oh, with what gladness had I suffered pain
 And hunger for him !

Why do I weep now ?
 I who made such a talk of sacrifice
 For his dear sake, now Heaven has granted me
 My wish, and bade me sink myself in him
 Wholly, with all my foolish love and hope.
 And if I lift that burden from his heart
 And my heart bears it, should I not be glad
 To stand apart with it ? I ought to kneel
 Down and thank God for answering my prayer.

Do I not bear enough? My days go on
Without a pause ; they bring no help, no change,
My nights no rest. I am so fretful grown
With sleeplessness, I can but weep to hear
The dreaded cock-crow ; see the hateful dawn
Lead on another hopeless, loveless day.
There is a mist before my eyes, a roar
Of many voices in my ears ; I walk .
As in a dream, the landscape that I love
Grows dim before me, and more ghostly dim
The loving faces looking on my woe.
Would that some quiet sense of homely things
Could move as once it moved me, and not seem
A thing put so far from me !

Let me look.

What is it they are doing, all of them,
Father and mother and the rest, out there ?
The new-mown hay lies all about the fields,
Sweetening the air for half a league around ;
The goats are straying homewards one by one—
It must be near their milking-time—and there
At the last stile my own poor “ Edelweiss ”
Stands waiting my caress, turns her white head
This way and that, till father fondles her
Just for my sake.

Ah me ! I have no heart
To care much for the tender care that shames
With too great kindness all my discontent.
Would *he* despise me, could he hear me now

Complaining thus?

For what a worthless life
Was mine before I knew him ! But 'tis changed.
Nothing can be as it has been, nor I
The silly thoughtless thing I used to be.
How ignorant I was ; and how content
With all my ignorance ! And then he came ;
Taught me a thousand things I did not know ;
Till with each scrap of knowledge came a sense
Of joy like nothing that I felt before.
For never did he let me feel ashamed
Of my poor self, but, teaching, made it seem
That this or that thought was in truth my own,
Only drawn out by him ; when, all the while,
I was but following blindly in the way
He pointed out and made all beautiful
And easy for me. There is not a flower,
However common ; not a blade of grass
That grows by the wayside, but he did show
Some grace in it I never saw before ;
And wheresoe'er I turn these lowly things
Must needs be too, each one in its dear self
A memory, a joy not to be lost,
However linked with sense of after-pain.
And was I happy in the far-off time
Before I saw or heard of him ? Somehow,
Happy I must have been, for never care,
Sickness or death has vexed our home ; they come
To others, but they pass us by. Ah, well !

'Tis strange to think how little happiness
Sufficed me then. And now—what would I have?
I know not.

Oh, thou dear for evermore!
I am not so ungrateful for the love
Thou once didst give, to say thou hast spoiled my life,
Withholding more. Through all its weary pain,
Would I not choose it—choose to bear the sting
Of vain desire and torturing memory,
Rather than miss the vision—ay, the dream
Of *such* a love?

Yes, mother. Yes, I come.

MARGERY.

Denn wo die Lieb' erwachet, stirbt
Das Ich, der dunkle Despot.
Du, laß ihn sterben in die Nacht,
Und athme frei im Morgenroth.

RÜCKERT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE fens of Cambridgeshire, the fertile land
That lies round Ely—flat, unbroken, tame ;
An endless stretch of reedy swamp and marsh,
Pasture, ploughed land, and acres thick with corn.
Howe'er it be, I love the pleasant land,
The land where I was born and once my home.
I love the heat of summer, and the power
Of light o'er all the world. For I have seen
The cloudless skies of Italy and felt
The warmth of her bright summer ; seen the sun
Shine o'er the loveliest landscapes of the world.
Nor ever fell the heat upon my brain ;
Nor ever shone the sun on mountain-peak,
On vine-empurpled slopes or sapphire sea,
But rose before me all the long expanse
Of fen and field alternating with field ;
And with it all there crowded on my mind
Things long forgotten, fancies that belonged
Only to that young life-time of the past,
Its idle hopes and fears and questionings,
And all my childish thoughts about the world.

It all came with the sunshine, as I felt
The old familiar sense of summer heat
That I had known in many a harvest-time,
When all the country looks its loveliest.
I knew that there, as here in Italy,
All the wide heavens were bare, and under them
The long low fields were lying all in light.

That flat unbroken fen land, after all
Is beautiful ; more beautiful to me
Even than Italy—I know not why.
Well I remember in the summer days,
In the high noon tide, at the sun's bright prime,
What glory comes upon the broad low lands ;
On all that pleasant landscape, stretching far
Down to the pale horizon, whose long line
No range of hills or rising woodland breaks.
Broad light on all the tracts of ripening corn
(Ripening to gold in this hot harvest-time),
On all the meadow-land, and here and there
A glint of light on marsh and rippled mere.
Th' aerial waves quiver with light ; there comes
A glare upon the long roads white with dust.
Far in the distance, down among the trees,
Lies the low town, but hidden ; all around,
Level and bare, all dry and grey with heat,
Stretch the long meadows, with a broken line
Of little trees so distant that they seem
To touch the sky-line where it fades away.
And here and there, breaking the dreariness,

The black and naked bulk of some tall mill,
Islanded singly in a waste of fen,
With idle arms in black and barred relief
Against an azure distance of calm sky.

And through the country, with a passing sound
Of lapping, wearing down the sandy banks
Above, a sound of rippling among sedge
Blent with its deep-voiced current ; 'twixt low shores,
Through many a lonely field, the river runs
Down to the town, a little widening there,
Where sleepy flats are lying in the sun,
And there are grey old houses on the banks,
And here a water-mill, with dyke and dam
And crested cataract among the stones.
The town o'erlooks the river, and a street
Runs all along beside it, like a quay,
With wooden steps down to the water's edge,
Where someone's boat is moored, and heaves and
 sways

With all the motions of the gentle tide.
Noonday of summer—in the silent town
The sunlight glares along the broad main street,
Burns down on roof and pavement, all along
The row of low white houses, with a flash
Of little suns in every window-pane.
The hot white dust lies everywhere unstirred ;
The streets are still, and on the quiet stream
The timber-freighted barges come and go.
Evening of summer—when with fall of dew

The very dust is sweetened, on the banks,
Some fisher, in the sunset's after-heat,
Watches his trembling float go up and down,
Till dusk is dark ; while over him, against
The crumbling buttress of the old stone bridge,
The lazy loungers lean and watch the tide
Beneath them flowing eastward lazily.

MARGERY.

I.

i.

NOT by the shade of a shame that's left
Round a hearthstone stained by a family crime ;
Not by the grief of a love bereft
Of its harvest due in the fields of time,
When a strangeness comes in the wedded life,
And the husband turns from the childless wife ;
Nor the bitterness born, and the social scorn
Of poverty, pitched with the world in strife ;
Not by any particular wrong
Of any, or definite evil done,
Is many a home made a wretched one,
Where love and honour by right belong.
But by grief that is grooved in a narrow line
Of household wrongs that escape report ;
By pride (be it but of the meaner sort),
Strifes and sorrows that are not fine ;

Selfish reserve and an injured spite ;
The commonest cares that are ever the same,
Of minds perplexed and ignobly vexed,
With the pettiest problems occupied quite ;
A delicate sense for a hint of offence
Brooding on injuries ever self sought.
And never anyone much to blame,
On the edge of an infinite wrong or right,
For a fault of the head, for an oversight
Of weakness knowing not what it ought.
When the gates of the will are thronged about
With idle fancies that cross the deed ;
The mind never vexed with a finer doubt,
Never void with a nobler need.
So ignorance ruins more lives than hate,
And folly sports in the masque of fate.

ii.

Yet, mother, had your love been such
That you had kept me by your side,
And soothed me with the tender touch
Of nursing hands ; nor yet denied
Of your sad heart—not all—not much,
But just the little more than due,
The little over and above
The common debt between us two ;
My stubborn will had ne'er defied
Thine, but had given love for love.
And, more than face or form could prove

My soul had owned thee mother true.
I—who have memories of thy face
Stained with swift tears, of hair grown grey
With petty griefs—my scorn were base
To touch on weakness such as thine,
Knowing that all thy narrow way
Was barred with binding frost like mine ;
And crossed by one whose egotist mood
Made half thy life a widowhood.

II.

i.

LET me look back. I seem to stand
No higher than here, as I hold my hand
Three feet from the ground ; and on either hand
Shut in by a twofold immensity.—
Time seems so long and space so wide ;
What are they that they clean divide
Father and mother and me ?

We three

Sit at one table, but live apart
With a tacit choice of our misery ;
Eyes looking to eyes that cannot see,
Or will not, each to the other's heart.
Father and mother had slowly grown,
In the course of their married life, to dwell
With so little of common thought in speech,
Each in a separate round from each,
With narrow interests of its own ;
That on all the house the shadow fell,
And I too came to live alone.

ii.

Yet I was happier than they,
My world was brighter ; that dark home
Ne'er missed me, if I chose to roam
Through field and fen for half the day.
I saw beyond that low flat land
Cloud-mountains in the sun-dyed west,
That tower o'er gulfs of calmest sky,
Then split, with every sinking crest
Stretched out in fiery reef and strand ;
Till all the splendours faint and die
In one broad tract of misty rose,
That ruddies all the reeded meres
And eastward streams ; till, at the close,
The last red cloud thins like a ghost,
And on the horizon dies away ;
And all the broken landscape wears
The aspect of a northern coast,
With sullen seas of coldest grey.
I was far happier. I could read ;
And lighting on the song by chance
Of one whose life was noble deed
(The issue of a noble creed
That articulated the just and true),
Girt round with cruellest circumstance
And trodden amid thorny ways,
I wrought the poet's story through
The tissue of my crude romance,

Light-woven in the golden days.
When every thought was of the world
And life—the present and to be—
(And all my vague philosophy,
Atomic notions blindly whirled
Round some dark centre of the brain.)
His mighty music mastered me,
And laid me low.

Ah ! not in vain
I deem these things, in separate kind,
Had power within my life and wrought
Such passion in a boyish mind,
To fix the colour of its thought.

iii.

And what, if a callous eye
Was cast upon all I did ?
What, if they passed me by
In silence ; or coldly chid,
If I pressed for their smiles, unbid ?
Had I not love and delight
Which were not of their giving. I hid
My life away, out of their sight ;
And it grew in the dark, amid
The dreams of its childhood's night.
And what, if my spirit unlearned,
In its loveless freedom wild,
Their teaching ? What if it spurned
The cheap things of the common store

Of knowledge? Has it not turned
Of itself to the richer lore
Which it loved? There were books all piled
On their shelves, and in heaps on the floor;
I had fingered and counted them o'er
Long ago, when a tiny child.
Well, one could sit with a book
All day in the long dark room,
Close hid in the curtain-gloom
Of a panelled window-nook;
Or, up in the garret high,
Could look to the eastward view
Of long fields that stretch to the blue,
Cloud-stranded line of the sky.'

iv.

All very well when the high noon-light
Streams on the stream and the road and the lea;
And you cannot turn to the left or right
But a thousand forms give company,
Fair and true to the commonest sight,
However a cheat the brain may be.
'Tis another thing, in the dusk of night,
In a cornered garret, a gable room,
To lie alone in the ghostly gloom,
With the mind on the rack of a deadly fright.
When the shadowy shapes of the swaying boughs
Of a tree outside in the garden fall,
And grope, and stagger across the wall,

With hands that beckon and nodding brows ;
Till the darkness follows and blots them all—
Cornered shadow, and stranded gleam,
Shapes (though I know them the commonest birth
Of moonlight and matter) that form, and seem
To live with a life that is not of this earth.
Then the nameless, notionless dread of *myself* ;
And of something other that's not myself,
Nor the shining length of the opposite shelf
(Where the moonlight falls in a little ridge
Gleaming enough to define the edge
And long black line of the centre beam) ;
Like a drowning death, it locks my breath
In my breast, that I may not scream ;
There is none of them all that would come to my call,
If I did, so I turn my face to the wall.
And I dare not open my eyes for dread
Of the hovering presence about my bed,
Now at the foot and now at the head ;
Till it merges troubling the depths of dream ;
Till it and the sense of a length of limb,
Numb with the terror, grow drowsed and dim,
And fade in the sense of a troubled dream—

.

III.

i.

OH, could I lay a hand on the wheel of time in its
turning ;
Slacken the hurrying speed of the weeks as they come
and go !
Or turn to some splendid use the fire that is burning,
burning ;
Ashes the days that are gone. Would God that it
were not so !

Fair—as the single star that puts forth at the voice of
even ;
A distant, an island light in the sky-sea's colourless
vast ;
Omega and Alpha too in the roll of the stars of
heaven—
Day of my spirit's birth ! Shine thou from the depths
of the past !

Day that was borne on the wings of the storm and
dawned in its lightning ;
All the long morning poured thy vials of fire and
rain ;

All the long afternoon, till the evening stole with a
brightening
Under the sinking sun, and a gleam on the beaten
grain.

All the long morning the doors were shut in the house,
and I wandered,
Treading the shaking floor of the lobbies, hearing the
stream
Of storm on the glistening pane ; until I had squandered
Nearly an hour away. Then I dropt in a waking
dream.

All the land of the soul lay dark, in the dark of her
heaven,
Till into the dream of that morning the splendour of
tempest wrought ;
And truth, stormlit for an instant, flashed in a glory,
given
When fire was freed from the chargèd gloom in a
lightning thought.

ii.

Family portraits here—Is my blood merely that of
some dozen
Gay-coated, square old squires, thick-limbed, red-
cheeked, narrow-brained ?

Or did she, the broad-browed, the lovely, there—
facing yon corpulent cousin—
Dower me alone with her darkness and lithe form
passionate-veined ?

Ah ! for *their* twilight sloth, give me toil of the spirit
that rather
Wars for the just and true, in the light of the breaking
morn.
Trust that our own wild age, though it rend the son
from the father,
Will fashion for fairer fate the soul of the child unborn.

Ay, in one home live the freeman and slave. For our
age is divided ;
Sceptical, credulous ; critical, blind ; half is bond and
half free ;
Many the voices that call to it ; truth—truth the
million-sided
Takes every hue of opinion ; they who love her best
cannot agree.

I have read myself into a trance. The phantom-
world slowly receding,
Blotting its beauty before me, the black bulk and
shadow of self,
Awful in loneliness, mystic, yet mocking. Still,
charmed by my reading,
A dozen books weighed and rejected, I came to the
last on the shelf.

Storm of mad atoms ! I bowed down my head to it
 (camel-like, quailing
When the Symoom wakes in the waste, and the dust
 of the desert is whirled
Blindly). Blind Nature has triumphed ; and self, the
 omnipotent, failing,
Revolves, a mere shadow-machine thrown back by
 the wheels of the world.

“ Matter ” and “ Force,” are they spectres that juggle
 and change ? Or more truly
Strong hands that have struck on the lyre of sense and
 outgiven—the “ soul,”
So much music that’s magical, lovely ; yet fleeting,
 and perishing duly
When the fingers cease playing ? I know not ; but
 humbly would hope, on the whole—

iii.

Then did I dream again in my brain the long dream
 of the ages ;
Saw in a vision the vanished powers of a day long
 gone—
Gods of the East and West ; and the ghosts of the
 crownèd sages
Solemn and slowly passed in the line of the pageant
 on.

The fervent East brought Fire, and the Sun, and a
night Chaldean,
Sown with the Stars whose number was as the sands
of the deep ;
There, Isis of Egypt veiled ; and, far in the vast
Pantheon,
India's gods, with dark eyelids closed in eternal
sleep.

And there were the vanquished gods of Greece and
the Northland, wearing
Ever their crownless heads more low in the passing
by ;
And formless shadows were mixed with the train of
their forms, not wearing
Likeness of anything created in earth or sky ;

These were the spectre gods that arise when the mind
of the nations
Casts on the colourless blank of Being the shade of
thought ;
Sickly and grey they were beside those supreme
creations
Warm with the light of earth, the powers of a faith
once wrought

Of strength and beauty, of fear and desire, of man's
love and his passion ;
Of wondrous things in the world ; the darkness of
death and of birth ;

Of all in the thought and being of man, when his
spirit could fashion

A glory of life from the lifeless, a god from the dust of
the earth !

Here too a secret power of life and death, and a
seeming

Law of the creeds, which suffer a change with the
changing need,

Till they die ; and perhaps a thought which had lain
in the darkness, dreaming,

Falls from the shattered husks of form, like a golden
seed.

Howbeit, they pass away, and one faith succeeds to
another.

Thine too, shall it not pass ? What is it ? It came
unsought

Into thy childhood's soul ; the creed of father and
mother,

Only teaching to thee the lesson their fathers taught.

iv.

Abroad in the open fields and alone. Ah, well I
remember

How my spirit was quickened with joy and with
sorrow that was not pain.

Splendid and strange over all was the light of that
young September,
Slanting the golden-green of meadows bright with the
rain.

For the day was dead which was born in the fury of
tempest, leaving
Only the passionless calm of an evening that brought
to me
Scent of the rain-washed fields in the clean air ;
weaving
All with the sound of the surf-strewn river seeking the
sea.

And to me too as unto the earth was a calm after
tempest given.
I saw not what spoil of ruin the powers of the storm
had won ;
Saw but the single star that stood in the pale blue
heaven,
High o'er a shattered harvest red with the sinking sun.

And the skeleton arms of the big black mill, where
the land was lonely,
Stood as a sign to the fiery west till the light had
ceased ;
And a shadow came on the level fields, and the river
only
Ran with the red of the sunset down to the darkening
east.

IV.

i.

WHERE can I find an inspiration ? Turning
Unto the world, where other eyes have seen
The self-same glory in the sunset burning,
The self-same wonder that hath ever been
In the old earth ? Through other lips than mine
Their glory and their wonder pass along,
Transformed, and fill the echoing walks divine
Of all the ages with immortal song.
Or in my own deep breast ? But what is there ?
The old eternal questions flung to heaven
Before, in the black moods of man's despair,
Whereunto never yet was answer given,
Or found. The hopes and scattered dreams that lie
Between us and the dark eternity.
No thought that is my own. And what am I,
That any song of mine should live and be
The voice of one who well interpreteth
Nature anew, and not alone the breath
Of mightier spirits that should speak through me ?
I am what books have made me, and no more ;
Most weak in my true self, a charmèd being,

Lost in some strange metempsychosis ; seeing
With other eyes that which was seen before.
Let Nature now do with me as she will.
Surely for every age her presence yields
A new immortal freshness of its own.
For me strange light shall fall upon the fields
Of life ; and bring forth from the vast unknown
Beauty and fragrance worth the gathering still.
And I will put all graver thought away
Till I have tried and exercised my spirit
In life ; and drunk the beauty of the day
And night ; and made my own what all inherit
From the great Mother. So may I behold
Another vision of the loveliness
Of earth, and find fit music to express
New thoughts and dreams that never yet were told.

ii.

What if on me the light supreme has shined ?
It burns within me as a central fire,
Lighting the inner chamber of my mind,
Where my soul sits, a vestal and alone,
Feeding with fervent thought and pure desire
Her steadfast flame. While all without is night,
And round her circling courts are shadows thrown
E'en from the brightness of that inner light.
It is no fire from heaven, snatched to burn

In kindly service to the household needs
Of men. It is no torch that I can turn
Where the dim way to deeper darkness leads.
Lit by the beams of that imprisoned star,
Though all the truth shine clear within my mind—
Myself still subject to a mastering doubt.
Could I but raise that light and pour it far
Where the weak will, whose workings are without,
Through all the broadening tracts of circumstance,
Walks among shifting shadows, and is blind
And powerless to breast the shocks of chance !

V.

YET, basest selfishness !
Do I repine ?
Is there not sorrow here
That is not mine ?
Tears that I cannot dry, though shed so near ;
Grief, and no love of mine can make it less.

Speak gently, and not so loud,
Mother, and tell me more.
Once, you say, he was proud
Of his bride and the heir she bore ?
Once—but a steady change
Is wrought by the conquering years,
On him and his waning wife ;
Making love's nearness strange,
Bringing the bitter of tears
To the sweetness of life.

Mother ! cancel the years,
The weary years that are gone,
Be as records washed out in tears
The thoughts that you weep upon.

Trust me. Forgive the pain
I have given you long ago.
See—we will live again,
As if it had not been so.

Trust me. Is it not sweet
To love as we may love yet ?
Did I not kneel at your feet
Like this, once ? Ah, well—you forget.

You are “ sick to the heart of words
Like mine ” ? I have said too much.
Maybe I stir these chords,
Unused, with a clumsy touch.

Why should I bare my heart ?
You will read it ever amiss.
Yes ; we have lived apart
So long, that it comes to this.—

Alas ! when a soul prefers
The lesser things, and the worse
Of the world—so small ! but a curse
Can work in their narrow room ;
And they have a breath that stirs
The avalanche weight of doom.

What time in my misery
I called on your love, your fate
Flung back this answer to me :
“ Away ! thou art come too late !
Love is faint, and she will not stir !
Love is dead, *I* have murdered her !
Curse, if a curse must be,
Not Love, but me—
Or thyself, who art come so late ! ”

VI.

AWAKE all the night, and the morrow
Has brightened and brought new grace
On the wings of its light, till sorrow
Shall know not her ancient place ;
For I saw last night, or I dreamed it—only a beautiful face.

I heard the light step of a woman,
And turned from her nevertheless ;
“Tis but some vapid, inhuman
Doll in a womanly dress ;
Only some ribboned and feathered, impertinent
prettiness !”

But she paused, and I saw her, a maiden
Garmented simply was she ;
As the robe that her form was arrayed in,
Pale seemed her beauty to be,
As she raised the grace of a perfect face to mine in
its purity.

A face that the day, to my thinking,
Has flushed under sunlit hair ;

Now, for the light was sinking
 Away through the depths of air,
As a blush rose bloom in the garden gloom, it fades
 with the dusk more fair.

Both of us looked to the meadows,
 Standing alone on the quay ;
And somebody down in the shadows
 Was looking for Margery—
Calling aloud through the darkness—telling her name
 to me.

Sweet name, sweet face, is it only
 You who have scattered the dreams
So far from my pillow, that lonely
 And loveless the long night seems,
And no sleep comes down with its shadow 'twixt me
 and the moonlit beams?

Alone by the river ; and surely
 No harm if I happened to see
Her dark eyes timidly, purely
 Looking a moment to me,
As the low voice came and betrayed her name,
 calling her “ Margery ! ”

VII.

i.

THE hot noon droops o'er leagues of sunburnt
meadows,
Warms the river in its running and the white dust in
the street ;
But our garden-walk leads winding where the shadows
Of the tall yew hedges meet.

The black moss path was gleaming
With the slender silver trails
Of the slowly crawling snails ;
And the sun in tiny diamond and star-like spaces
streaming
Lit up bright green and golden-crested mosses at my
feet ;
As I whiled the noon away just in sauntering and
dreaming ;
Idly yielding to the languor of the heat.

While from where the glowing gardens with their
torrid pathways glared,
And luxuriant, full-flowered all their wastes and
borders flared,

Crimson, purple, red and orange ; through the still-
ness came and went

A hot breath that throbbed and hovered, till the dust
beams were blent,

In their dimness, with thire scent,

Dim and sweet,

Of faint flowers that were dying of the heat.

When, glancing quickly through

One bright window in the yew,

I saw a deeper shadow with a light beside it pass

O'er the shadows on the grass.

And the shadow and the light

Were the black dress and the white

Of my mother and one with her whom I knew.

ii.

A faint touch, a sweet name spoken ;

The hot-hearted silence broken

By slight greetings ; then a darkness coming on.

For the sudden splendour dies ;

The new joy, the bright surprise

Flashes forth an instant only, and is gone.

She is gone ; has left me wandering for an hour
In the garden, plucking here and there a flower
From the places where I gathered them for her.

Left me, dozing in the arbour,
Whose neglected corners harbour
All the crawling things and insects that are heat-born
of the sun.

Do I fancy a light breath and footstep stir
Dusty web and strand of gossamer
By the clawing spiders spun?
Half-asleep; and can it be—
Day-dreaming of the dusk-eyed maiden, Margery?

VIII.

SUCH slight thoughts my heart will cherish,
A remembered look or tone,
The faint warmth that will not perish
From a hand that touched her own.

Is it love? Ah, love's light pleasure,
It were never so content
With a passionless hand-pressure,
With soft words that were not meant
For his hearing. Love is selfish, on his sweet fulfil-
ment bent.

True love would loathe the even,
And his own bright star in heaven;
But my heart would not repine.
For me, not broken-hearted,
Since no burning lips were parted
Shall the star of parting shine.

IX.

FADE not from my sight ; but come alway,
When the lidless eyed, the wakeful hours
Drag their heavy feet through moonless gloom :
 Come in thoughts of the remembered day ;
 As your breath of song and odorous flowers,
 And your beauty filled the darkened room,
Fill the darker lapses of the night
With the lingering sense of their delight.
And if wanton memory's random gleams
Find thy image wandering with swift dreams,
Wilt thou not pause and follow not their flight ?

X.

WHAT are thy thoughts ? I know them not ; they rest
Between thy heart and thee—sweet thoughts, long
hidden,

Like lover's flowers some maiden, love-forbidden,
Treasures in secret in a joyless breast.

What is thy faith ? I care not. Let thy creed
Be what it may, sweet child, thy god is mine
So soon as thy heart says, " Love is divine ; "
So his our service be, in word, life, deed.

What is thy life ? No higher than belongs
To some poor mobile, amiable mate
Of meanness ; yet thy spirit makes it great
In love and patient suffering of small wrongs.

What were thy love ? Oh, dearest, wert thou mine,
Thy love were strength in weakness perfected,
Were victory, were life to one half-dead,
Fendered anew as from a hand divine.

XI.

LONG had I vowed and faltered, but at last
I said, "O Love, dispute not so with Doubt ;
Triumph, O Love ! and give me strength to cast
Thy spirit into speech and dare the worst."
I wondered how all men who have loved found out
A tongue to tell it. "In still rooms, or here,
In face of earth and heaven loved best and first,
In that long life-time when I loved not her,
It were well done." But then there came the fear
Of love's strange voice amid that quietness.
I talked of other things ; and found, no less,
That silence should but make it easier
To speak of love, than suddenly to break
A trivial theme with passion. "I will speak—"
But, when I looked at her, the fancy fired
My face and forehead with a sudden shame ;
And all her girlish loveliness became
A thing to fear, lest love should be offence
With his first thoughts, unknown and undesired,
Stirring about its dreamless innocence.

XII.

FOOL, fool ! Does fancy bring the vain regret,
That, had thy heart true courage to speak out,
This night, when careless fingers only met,
Our lips might then and evermore have set
Their seal to either's faith? 'Tis well, if doubt
Can soothe me with this thought—that haply, were
My love so told, I might be bearing now
Not her sweet lips' light pressure on my brow,
But a strange sorrow's burden heavier,
By the love's strength to bear it to the end.
Yet there was kindness in the upturned face,
Which, if her inmost spirit held me base—
Oh ! thus doubt plays with phantasies which lend
Only a colour to conceit. I know
This much, that I may call myself her friend ;
And that I could be, though another's kiss
One hour before had bound and pledged her his.
Sweet words and smiles and blushes—let them go ;
Born of such simple trustfulness, they prove
Lighter than nothing in the cause of love.

XIII.

So then—Good-night ! The shadow of my home
Looms darker for the glory of a day
Foregone ; ere some far-off to-morrow come,
That brings again love's hour as bright and rare
As this that's lost, ere then, my heart would pray
That love's dark doubt die not in love's despair.

“ Good-night ! ” “ Farewell, sleep well ! ” she whispers.

Yes,

Tis best, “ Good-night.” Shut to the door, and set
A lamp within to mock my loneliness.

You think me gone ? Nay ; I am lingering yet ;
To-night my sweet love sings so late and long :

“ Ask me, but not for love,” so falls her song
Down through the darkness, wanders, comes and
goes ;

Only an idle song—“ if love—if love ”—

What next ?—the lamplight dies, and I must move
So soon my troubled shadow from thy door ;

Dearest, I wait to listen ! sing the close
Less sweetly faint, for I would hear it all,
All—all—'tis foolish music and no more.

Well, rest ; I have outwatched thy chamber-light :

I'll dream that song what time the midnight fall

Betwixt thy sleep and mine. “ Good-night—good-
night ! ”

XIV.

THOU seemest calm, fair river, that didst run .
So passionately last night ; in this thou art
E'en as my love, in which thou shalt have part,
Nor make it less. What hath thy swift stream done ?
Whither hath borne me ? 'Twas but yesternoon
It brought me to still reaches where I lay,
Lapped in the languid weather of mid-June,
Under a pollard willow ; till the day
Fainted in golden even on the stream.
When, from a hot midsummer's sensuous dream
Waked by the steps of one who came to seek
Dark haunts of water-flowers, I, lazily
Stirring the warm green weeds that choked the creek,
Saw on the reeded margin of the shore,
Full in the flush of sunset—Margery ;
Her figure, as I knew it (lightly dressed
In white or those faint colours which she wore)
Bent ; while in rippled shadows of the trees
The floating image of her face and breast
Swayed with the shadows in the passing breeze,
She thought not of herself, and so forgot
To think that one should love her, though so fair.
She knew not that the sunset fired her hair
With passing stars and strands of light, and set

Above her brow a burning coronet
Of threaded gold and auburn. Everywhere
The sun's last splendour poured, and in that spot
Where she was centred—and she knew it not.

One look to the far fields, another thrown
Up to the flushing sky ; and then the weight
Of her half-timid arm upon my own ;
Then the boat, rocking with its slender freight,
Heaved from the shore.

Away ! With easy strength
(She was so light) we shot the creek's calm length,
On to the dazzling river. Through heaven's grey
The long clouds drifted sunwards ; swift as they,
Sunwards we sped, on to the distant town.
Flush with the long horizon, half the sun
Streamed its swift light upon the stream. Away !
Flung to her feet her flowers forgotten lay ;
We passed the water-lilies one by one,
Forgotten too. She, sitting meekly down
In her sweet trustfulness, looked up to me
From time to time, nor spoke. I watched her fold
Her little hands together, soft and brown,
And made for gentle hands to touch and hold—
None other. So we rowed on silently,
Lonely the lengths of land, and lonely we.
Ah, wherefore speed so quickly ? Let it come,
Dark night, and find us still no nearer home ;
Let's drift through darkness onward, Margery

And I—alone, until that morning meet
Our faces, eastward looking, which shall see
Bright Love beside us on the vacant seat !

.
Dearest, dost think that life was but a dream,
Before love woke us, or a sleep, no more ?
Dost thou not feel as though the words we spoke
An hour ago, the rushing of the stream,
Its sunset glare and all that went before
Are now as though they had not been ? We woke
From sleep in that long silence of the land,
Just in the pause of twilight before night ;
Each trembled, waking in the uncertain light,
To feel the nearness of the other's hand.
Strangely we gave and took the one first kiss ;
If love can change it needs must be in this—
So that these kisses seem not cold, nor strange
The nearness of each soul to touch and bless
The other, nor love's utmost tenderness.
Then fear not, if I tell thee love shall change.

XV.

WHAT, dearest, dost thou play, that has so deep
And strange a voice to tell of sorrowing ?
What dost thou play ? Such music seems to keep
A strain of every heart's own misery ;
That, hearing, I could dream how it might bring
Back unforgotten feelings, that still creep
Blindly through twilights of their ancient past,
To those who sorrow, ageing ; as to me
It pours the passionate pathos of lost love,
So slow, so soft, the grieving voice above
The beating heart, that sobs itself at last
To silence and the hush of moon-lit sleep.

Once more ! This time it rather says : " Forget
Life's darkness, where the unskilled spirit strays
In discords. Learn thou how the Master let
The sorrow of his deaf and lonely days
Pass from his heart in music, glorified
In that last change. 'Tis to his art's great gain
The artist knows and shares man's misery
And loss and love's unconquerable pain.
His soul transmutes all suffering, and sets free
From evil that last good, which shall abide
A glorious and perpetual harmony."

CONCLUSION.

ALL things have beauty for me, wheresoe'er
'Tis Nature lives and works. So can I feel
The same high presence with me even here
In these tame lowlands ; for the self-same soul
Works all in all, in life and seeming death,
In beauty and corruption ; silently
In gentle growth, as turns the tender blade
To yellow stalk, the germ to ripened ear—
The same great power prevailing over all,
The same great law which works within ourselves
With m'ighty forces multiplying change.

I will not turn me from the living world
To brood, in agony of heart and brain,
Over the silent depths of consciousness,
Calling its shadowy forms in vain to give
Answer, and solve the mystery of life ;
So have I done,—that dark hour passed away
'Twixt youth and manhood, yet it left my brain
Perhaps a little abler than before
To speculate and reason ; having gained
A certain strength in the hard toil of thought.
“ Vision of life, what art thou ? ” I had cried,
“ What meaning in thy ceaseless strife, thy wrong,

Sorrow, and want, and pain, alternating ? ”
I wrung no answer from the voiceless void
Of being. Then love came, sweeter than thought,
And touched the blinded eyes, the lightning-struck
Of heaven, with his warm kisses, and they saw.
I rose, and looked into the world—there fell
A light which made the whole world beautiful ;
Even the common places of the earth,
And the dark homes of men. “ The dream,” I said,
“ If false, is fair.” Then, journeying on, I saw
The central cities dense and populous ;
And heard the incessant murmur and the stir
Of life in many nations ; everywhere,
Through hurrying throngs of human forms, I looked
Into the troubled faces as they passed,
And wept to see their pallid sickness.
As ever in the maze of noisy streets
The trampling crowd swept on, they passed me by,
Their faces worn and dark with heavy toil,
The labourers among men, whose days are spent
Toiling in spiritual darkness, bound to earth,
And fettered with their iron tools, debased,
Deformed with such rude life in obscure ways.

And I ? what feeble egotist am I,
That I have spurned this earnest life, and dwelt
In narrow circles of returning thought,
Self-centred, self-absorbed ! Oh, let me live !
Let me cast in my lot with thee, at last,

Dark world of toiling millions ! dense with life,
Amidst the roar of vast machinery,
Midst human cries of joy and wretchedness,
Struggling in blindness to some certain end ! .

And I will worship all in all, and feel
In the wide world, and in my own dark soul,
The same deep life that flows from One to all.
And thus the dense bulk and the shadow of Self
That darkening stood between me and the world,
Blotting its loveliness, shall pass away.

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